DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 966 CS 504 028

AUTHOR Patton, Bobby R.
TITLE Interpersonal Communication Applications: Considerations for Curriculum and Professional Integrations.
PUB DATE Nov 82
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (68th, Louisville, KY, November 4-7, 1982).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Curriculum Development; Educational History; *Education Work Relationship; Higher Education; Human Relations Programs; *Interpersonal Communication; *Speech Communication; *Speech Curriculum
IDENTIFIERS *University of Kansas Lawrence

ABSTRACT

The roots of the interpersonal communication program at the University of Kansas (Lawrence) lay in the human relations training program initiated there in the late 1940's. Probably the major contribution of human relations to interpersonal communication was in its focus on experiential learning through laboratory training. In the fall of 1967, an introductory interpersonal communication course was offered. One of the major implications of the shift to interpersonal communication in the Kansas curriculum was the placing of the department in the area of social sciences. Outside the university setting, there are four areas in which people trained in interpersonal communication have been able to make an impact: (1) marriage and family communication, (2) business and industry, (3) government and public organizations, and (4) service professions. (A list of important factors in the selection of college graduates for employment that reveals how much society values interpersonal communication skills is appended.) (JL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Bobby R. Patton
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED222966

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION APPLICATIONS: Considerations for Curriculum and Professional Integrations

Bobby R. Patton

University of Kansas

(A paper prepared for presentation at the Speech Communication Association National Convention, November 5, 1982, Louisville, Kentucky.)

During the first week in October while collecting my thoughts for this paper, I received a telephone call from the Personnel Director of the Topeka State Hospital. Due to budget problems in our State, questions were being raised concerning the efficiency of the communication systems within the hospital. He hoped that I or someone that I could recommend might be available to help them with an analysis of their communication systems and make some recommendations concerning improvement. Such a call is not unusual, and we were able to make satisfactory arrangements. The thought occurred to me in the context of my paper that, without the work that we have been doing in interpersonal communication for the past couple of decades, we would not have such visibility and perceived expertise.

Last spring Tim Cline charged that I should "identify current uses of interpersonal principles in various contexts with a critical eye toward meaningful contributions to society." I readily accepted this challenge, believing that interpersonal communication has been an applied discipline and that such contributions could be readily identified. The more I read and the closer I came to formulating my ideas, however, the more I realized that my notes tended to merely recount the obvious and the mundane. Instead of recounting broad generalizations, I decided to focus on my personal

CS507-8

experiences and those of my colleagues at The University of Kansas in the area of applied interpersonal communication.

The roots of the interpersonal communication program at Kansas lay in human relations training. This training had its beginning in the 1930s, when the results of behavioral scientists' research on industrial organizations and small groups began to bring into question many of the traditional assumptions and policies employed in the management of human affairs. The problems of overt conflict in labor-management and inter-group relations created interest in research and training techniques. The morale problems and questions of productivity further provoked interest. The most prominent innovator in the area of training theory and research was the National Training Laboratories in Group Development in Bethel, Maine. A division of the National Training Lab (or NTL) was the Midwest Group for Human Resources located in Kansas City near our campus. Probably the major contribution of human relations to interpersonal communication was in its focus on experiential learning through laboratory training.

On The University of Kansas campus an interdisciplinary program in Human Relations was initiated in the late 1940s. Building on the experiences of several of our faculty who participated in a special cooperative program with the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, a Department of Human Relations was established at The University of Kansas in 1949. Although several members of our current speech communication faculty, including Bill Conboy, Hob Crockett, Howard Baumgartel, and Kim Giffin participated in this interdisciplinary program, it was not until 1966-67 that the program was officially integrated into our department, changing the name of one of our divisions to Speech Communication and Human Relations.

My own involvement was expanded when, as the Director of the Basic Speech Program, I was commissioned to develop an introductory interpersonal communication course to begin in the fall of 1967. This course was to provide an option to the public speaking requirement and was to be taught by graduate teaching assistants. The development of challenge was an interesting one because at that time most of the materials in our field had been prepared for graduate level instruction, and the speech field was more concerned with research in that area than with applications.

I remember vividly and fondly the summer of 1967. I taught a special graduate seminar for the purpose of developing the syllabus and materials for this course. Among the students who participated in this project were Paula Adrian Wright, Shirley Masterson Gilham, Mary Reeves, Charles Roegiers, Karen Bacus, Paul Cleckner, Alastair Riach, Chuck Fulcher, Stewart L. Tubbs, Paul Page, and Mary Heider. In addition, graduate students, Dennis Smith, Jessie Delia, Gus Friedrich, and David Swanson, offered suggestions and input. We decided early that the focus of the class meetings was to be on student participation and involvement. "Relevancy" was a key term at that time, and we selected materials that could be made germane to the students' experiences. We drew materials from small group classes, from the upper level courses in human relations, from exercises utilized in classes taught by participants of the summer seminar, and worked to develop new exercises that would illustrate goals that we established. The absence of freshman-level instructional materials prompted me to begin in the fall of 1967 to write the text materials with Kim Giffin that some of you know.

In the fall of 1967, students could choose either the interpersonal course or the public speaking course to satisfy the College requirement.

Our efforts were positively reinforced by student response to the course. A survey of University of Kansas students conducted by the School of Education in 1969, showed the speech requirement to be the most popular of the required courses on campus. The survey reflected a marked change in the student attitudes of 1966, when 50 percent of the seniors surveyed wanted to abolish the speech requirement.

From this 15-year association with the basic course, I would now like to focus on applications of interpersonal communication. First, within our University and, second, within the larger community.

Interpersonal Applications in the University Curriculum

One of the major implications of the shift to interpersonal communication in the Kansas curriculum has been to place us with credibility in the area of Social Sciences. Without diminishing the Humanities offerings, we have been able to develop a series of courses that clearly reflect the concerns of social scientists. In addition to courses in human relations and small groups, we now have in the Kansas curriculum such courses as: Interpersonal Communication Between Women and Men; Speech and Personal Relations; Interpersonal Attitudes in the Communication Process; and Communication in Conflict Resolution. These courses satisfy Social Science distribution requirements for undergraduates. In addition, the interpersonal orientation has provided an effective orientation for courses in intercultural communication and organizational communication. All of these courses continue to have heavy student demand and are well-regarded within the university community.

In our university, departments are linked for organizational purposes into three sub-categories: Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social

Sciences. Communication Studies is linked with Social Sciences and has been actively involved in deliberations with other Social Science departments. Currently, a proposal is being formulated to ensure that all students at The University of Kansas be required to take several Social Science courses. Among the options that are being proposed are: a basic course in interpersonal communication and a lecture course entitled "Explorations in Human Communication."

The presence of interpersonal communication in the curriculum has provided a strong curricular offering in most departments of Speech Communication around the country. At a time when student enrollments are valued currency, our departments and our professional field have been strengthened by this component. We are also constantly striving to apply our interpersonal communication courses in new ways and in new subject areas. Last summer I had the opportunity to teach a course involving both university undergraduates and members of the Elderhostel Program entitled, "Intergenerational Communication." This course was a follow-up to a course I had taught in interpersonal communication in the Elderhostel Program during the previous summer.

Intepersonal Applications to Society

Consider now with me, the applications of interpersonal communication outside the university setting. I shall enumerate four areas in which people trained in interpersonal communication have been able to make impact.

(1) Applications to Marriage and Family Communication. The basic theory and research of interpersonal communication have provided a viable framework for workshops and training programs dealing with communication

in marriage and family. A variety of religious groups have incorporated programs designed to enrich relationship capabilities and have drawn heavily from the published materials in our interpersonal communication literature. A number of professionals in our field have become certified as communication trainers. For example, the Minnesota Couple Communication Program, headed by Sherod Miller, Elam Nunnally, and Daniel Wackman, has provided training programs nationally in association with the American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors. Several Kansas graduates have been certified as family counselors and one of my current students has been certified as a "Divorce Mediator."

(2) Applications in Business and Industry. The skills implicit in interpersonal communication are strongly emphasized within business organizations. Graduates of our program are able to take positions in public relations, personnel, management and as consultants to communication within organizations. Specifically, one of our graduates heads the Personnel Department of Sterling Drugs, another is Training Director for Macy's Department Stores,, another is Public Relations Director for The Chicago Tribune, and several have established private consulting firms.

(3) Applications in Government and in Public Organizations. All of us can cite names of former colleagues and students who have moved to influential positions in both state and national government offices and in work for professional organizations. The skills that we have developed in interpersonal communication theory have proven to be extremely viable for employment in such offices as Affirmative Action. At the University of Kansas, for example, all four directors of Affirmative Action that we have had have held advanced degrees in our discipline. Quincalee Brown

is Executive Director of the AAUW; the head of the Kansas Penal System is a Kansas Communication Studies graduate. The emphasis on interpersonal communication and human relations has been a viable credential in the public market place.

(4) Applications in Service Professions. Students trained in interpersonal communication have been able to serve vital societal needs through their training. One of our students in the 1960s formed a drug abuse counseling center as a class project in a human relations course. That center, known as Headquarters, has expanded into a full program of crisis counseling. One of our current students is training director and a number of our students have or are working there. The Women's Resource Center and Women's Transitional Care Center have our students in staff positions.

Appended to this paper is a list of "Important Factors in the Selection of College Graduates for Employment," cited in The Endicott Report 1976. I am pleased that the Number One factor is "Personal qualifications including maturity, initiative, enthusiasm, poise, appearance and the ability to work with people." The phrase "effective interpersonal communication skills" is valued in our society. To the extent that our field can make meaningful contributions in developing these skills, we will be acknowledged as making significant contributions to our society.

THE ENDICOTT REPORT
1976

Trends in Employment of College and University Graduates in Business and Industry

Thirtieth Annual Report
A Survey of 225 Well-Known Business and Industrial Concerns

By

Frank S. Endicott
Director of Placement, Emeritus
Northwestern University

IMPORTANT FACTORS IN THE SELECTION OF COLLEGE GRADUATES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Of special interest to college students, parents, faculty members and counselors is the relative importance of various factors which employers consider in selecting college graduates for employment. In other words, how do recruiters determine which applicants are best qualified?

Respondents to this year's inquiry were asked to rank, in order of importance, six factors which are commonly considered by employers in the selection of college graduates. Responding employers ranked the six factors from 1 to 6, with number one representing greatest importance.

It was noted in tabulating the responses that some employers ranked certain factors high and others ranked them lower. The average rankings in the following table are, therefore, only general indications of relative importance.

FIELDS OF STUDY IN COLLEGE

FACTORS CONSIDERED IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY GRADUATES	Engineering and Other Technical		Accounting and Bus. Admin.		Liberal Arts and Other Non-Tech.		All Fields of Study	
	Order	Avg. Rank	Order	Avg. Rank	Order	Avg. Rank	Order	Avg. Rank
Personal qualifications including maturity, initiative, enthusiasm, poise, appearance and the ability to work with people.	(1)	1.97	(1)	1.73	(1)	1.52	(1)	1.75
Scholastic qualifications as shown by grades in all subjects or in a major field.	(2)	2.37	(2)	2.43	(2)	2.64	(2)	2.47
Specialized courses relating to particular field of work.	(3)	2.72	(3)	3.07	(5)	3.99	(3)	3.22
Kind and amount of part-time or summer employment while in college	(4)	3.72	(4)	3.89	(4)	3.85	(4)	3.82
Experience in campus activities, especially leadership and participation in extra-curricular life.	(5)	4.31	(5)	3.94	(3)	3.60	(5)	3.96
General or liberal arts courses designed to provide a broad and cultural background.	(6)	5.54	(6)	5.41	(6)	5.05	(6)	5.35
Number of companies responding		166		190		146		215